

King of Laos Is Set to 'Abdicate'

Vientiane

King Savang Vathana of Laos has decided to abdicate, and the Communists controlling the country are preparing to announce the end of the 19-month-old coalition government, informed sources said today.

The end of the coalition government means the ouster of the neutralist premier, Prince Souvanna Phouma, the sources said.

The 74-year-old prince, who has headed the Laotian government for 13 years, has been virtually powerless since the Communist Pathet Lao took control of the government last spring. Diplomatic reports yesterday said that the premier was planning to resign and go to France.

Savang Vathana came to the throne on Nov. 4, 1959, following the death of his father, King Sisavang Vong. In recent weeks, 37 members of the royal family fled to Thailand, en route to France.

Among them was the king's youngest son, Prince Soriyawong, who told Thai officials that the Pathet Lao was determined to abolish the monarchy and put all people, including members of the royal family, to work in the fields, the officials reported.

Informed sources said that Acting Foreign Minister Phoune Sipraseuth yesterday informed an assembly of Western diplomats, United Nations representatives and the International Control Commission of the impending end of the coalition government. However, the conservative and neutralist members of the cabinet had been only figureheads for months.